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# NEWS RELEASE

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**For Immediate Release:**  
Thursday, August 31, 2000

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## **WEST NILE VIRUS DETECTED IN THIRD MONROE COUNTY BIRD**

A dead bird found on Southern Drive in the town of Brighton has tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV), the third positive bird in Monroe County.

County Health Director Andrew S. Doniger emphasized that the finding of another confirmed case of the virus in a bird does not mean that the public is at any greater danger from this disease.

"We have long believed that West Nile Virus exists throughout Monroe County," Dr. Doniger said. "Finding this bird merely confirms our suspicions and we fully expect that more positive bird tests will come back over the coming weeks."

County health officials emphasize that with proper precautions, people can still safely enjoy the outdoors. Over 1/2 of New York's 62 counties report WNV activity and state officials believe the virus has spread throughout the state.

The Monroe County Health Department will immediately undertake a number of actions as a result of finding a dead bird infected with WNV, including:

- Initiate mosquito larvicide program in catch basins and other standing water within an approximate two-mile radius of the where the bird was found.
- Work with town officials to survey the area within the 2-mile radius to eliminate standing water and to disseminate information on WNV
- Increase mosquito collection and testing in affected area
- Increase bird testing from area where bird was found
- Mail a comprehensive brochure developed by the Monroe County Departments of Health and Communications and Special Events on West Nile Virus and how to protect yourself to every household in Monroe County.

The New York State Health Department has declared Monroe County to be under a Public Health Threat with the confirmation of the virus.

Health officials urge the public, particularly people over the age of 50, to exercise caution, but stress that less than 1% of people infected with WNV will have symptoms serious enough to require hospitalization. The vast majority of people fully recover from the illness. WNV is rarely fatal except for people who are otherwise at very high-risk due to other health problems.

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West Nile Virus is a viral infection that is transmitted by mosquitoes. Most people will experience no symptoms, or will have mild flu-like symptoms such as a slight fever, headache or body aches. In the most serious cases, infection can result in encephalitis, which is an inflammation of the brain. It usually takes between 5-15 days for symptoms to develop. There is no specific treatment or vaccine for WNV.

The Monroe County Health Department has applied for required permits from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation to apply larvicide to bodies of water not easily drained.

The Health Department published a notice in the Democrat and Chronicle more than a week ago, stating its intention to apply larvicides in conformance with the permits. Those permits require an additional 48-hour notice of intent to apply the larvicide in specific areas. That notice, for the area bounded by Elmwood Ave. on the north, Calkins Rd. on the south, Route 390 on the east and the Genesee River on the west (an approximate 2-mile radius surrounding the site where the bird was found), is given today by the publication of this and other news releases.

Health officials request that the public continue to report dead birds to enable the tracking of the illness in Monroe County. Staff may ask that the bird be retained for testing or instruct people to dispose of the bird if testing is deemed unnecessary. Crows and bluejays are the primary bird species being tested at this time.

A 24-hour information line has been established and will be updated regularly. The number is **234-9600**. Extensive information on WNV is available at the Monroe County Web site: [www.co.monroe.ny.us/health](http://www.co.monroe.ny.us/health).

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*For More Information:*  
*Communications and Special Events, 428.2380,*  
Or see us on the web at *www.co.monroe.ny.us*